



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Carlsbad BLM wins National Award for Delaware River Riparian Restoration**

Carlsbad, NM – The Bureau of Land Management’s Carlsbad field office will receive this year’s *Award of Excellence in Riparian Management* from the American Fisheries Society for work done to restore riparian habitat along the Delaware River. The award, which will be presented on September 13<sup>th</sup> to BLM employees John Sherman and Steve Daly at the Society’s annual convention in Alaska, recognizes agency resource specialists for their efforts to maintain, restore and improve riparian watershed ecosystems.

Sherman and Daly have worked on restoration of the river since the early 1990s. BLM Associate State Director Jesse Juen, who spent time on this project when he worked in the Carlsbad office, believes this project is nationally significant. “It’s exciting to see a project recognized for its merits,” said Juen. “We’ve taken a badly degraded riparian area and restored it to a healthy condition. Equally important is the fact we can now return this area to the community for recreational use.”

The Delaware River traverses more than nine miles of New Mexico along the Texas border south of Carlsbad; it was choked with exotic, water-thirsty salt cedar had that pushed out native vegetation, which was literally suffocating the river. In conjunction with the State of New Mexico, which administers the lands on the north bank of the river, BLM eradicated salt cedar and other non-native vegetation, planting native grasses, brush and trees along the riverbanks.

To date, three miles of the river have been rehabilitated. Flow rates have increased from .166 cfs (cubic feet per second) to 2.95 cfs. River salinity levels have been reduced along with the amount of sediment entering the river. With the salt cedar removed, the river has flowed year-long even during drought times.

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Birds like the yellow billed cuckoo, bell's vireo, gray vireo and the painted bunting have all shown up since the habitat was restored. "The habitat we've created is suitable for these species, as well as birds tied to a cottonwood/willow over story," said wildlife biologist John Sherman. Reptiles, including the state-endangered plain bellied water snake and a turtle called the river cooter, have also shown up.

"The Delaware River is now a great place to hike and camp," said Tony Herrell, manager of the BLM's Carlsbad Field Office. "The award we will receive is not only important for the BLM, but also to the community of Carlsbad because it recognizes that our local riparian resources are of national significance."